



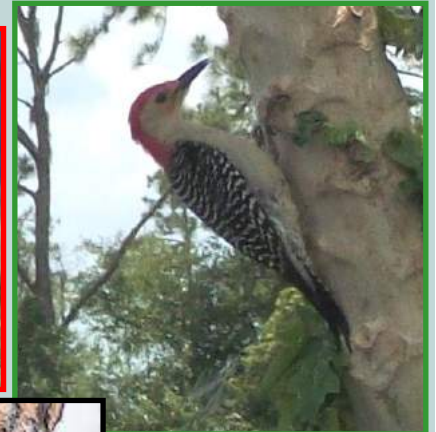
The Benedictine Tide

Benedictine Sisters of Florida

Touching Lives Through Prayer and Service

Summer 2023

Critters



Saint Benedict wrote that monasteries are never without guests. And though he makes no provisions in His rule for the non-human ones, they are here with the sisters nonetheless.

The Dialogues of St. Gregory contain the only known historical accounts of Saint Benedict's life. There we read that an envious priest from a nearby church tried to murder him by sending him a poisoned bread as a gift. Saint Benedict was aware of the danger and called on a raven that he had befriended for help. His instructions to the raven were to take the bread away to a place where it would do no harm to anyone. The raven did as Saint Benedict asked.



So, we thought you might enjoy a few "critter" tales from our own monastic community here in Florida. While it is certainly true that our beloved Prioress S. Roberta need not fear any bodily harm from "critters", it is also true that God's creatures have much to teach all of us of the glory and wisdom of God. I hope you enjoy our stories!

Sister Eileen Dunbar, OSB

Community Retreat

May 24-31, 2023



Sister Judith Sutura, O.S.B., the director for our retreat this summer, is a sister of Mount Saint Scholastica, Atchison, Kansas. Sister Judith ministers in communications and public relations for the community. With degrees in counseling and theology, she is also an oblate director, author and director of retreats and work-

shops on monastic spirituality.



Mount St. Scholastica
Atchison, Kansas

On Humility

The Benedictine Sisters of Florida made their annual communal retreat May 24 through May 31, 2023.

The Retreat Director was Sister Judith Sutura, OSB from Mount St. Scholastica in Atchison, Kansas. The theme of our retreat was from the Rule of St. Benedict, Chapter 7, "On Humility". Throughout the days of our retreat, we had morning and evening conferences, as well as individual conference with Sr. Judith. We were in silence during our retreat days except during the time of our evening meal.

This retreat was excellent. Sr. Judith enriched us and enlightened us in each conference by sharing her wisdom, insight, biblical verses and rich content of the virtue of humility. At the end of each conference, she gave us one or two questions to reflect on concerning the important aspects of monastic humility.

She talked about humility and how it connects with other concepts such as obedience, prayer, stability, and hospitality.

She pointed out to us that humility is the foundation of our relationship with God, our relationship with others, our self-acceptance and the living of a holy life. Holy people keep balance in their life. Humility is the means by which they achieve that balance. It gives us the

stability of mind in times of sorrow, tragedy, disappointment, hardship, and loss.

During our life on earth, we reach heaven by means of a ladder. This ladder should be erected as the ladder which the old testament patriarch Jacob saw in a dream. In that dream he saw angels going up and down from earth to Heaven. This up and down can signify that we go down by our pride and up by our humility. If we are humble, the Lord will lift us to heaven. St. Benedict sees our body and our soul as the two sides of this ladder. Into these sides are inserted the various steps of humility or discipline that we ascend.

The twelve steps of Humility which St. Benedict outlines are progressive. We must attain the first before we understand the second. We take one step at a time, one foot after the other as we move upward.

Sr. Judith concluded our retreat by saying to us that monastic humility properly disposes us to live a life of radical hospitality. Radical hospitality starts at a place of trust and faith. It is the privilege of welcoming Christ. We must welcome everyone as Christ regardless of color, culture, language, or accent. Hospitality is the only thing that matters in the end.

As we receive people who come to our door, we need to celebrate their arrival. We need to welcome guests with hope. Prayer gives us wisdom. Wisdom brings hope. Hope will aid us in our welcoming. Stability and humility cast out fear and grant us the courage to open ourselves to all who come to the monastery.

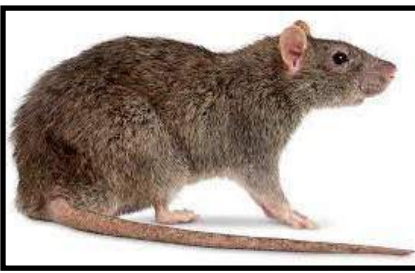
Sister Elizabeth Mathai

Who's There?

In the last Tide I told the story of my encounter with a former WWII German prisoner of war. This narrative is about an encounter of a different sort.

I was walking up the east stairwell of our former monastery (now Saint Leo University Benedictine Hall). I glanced up to the first landing and was surprised to discover that I wasn't alone. A tail was curled around where the left wall ended on the landing above me. As I continued up the stairs, the tail slid around the corner and disappeared.

Unsure as to what I was going to see, I stepped onto the landing and turned to look up the stairs. The rat was standing on its hind legs about halfway up on one of the steps.



It seemed healthy with a nice coat of fur and appeared sleek and well-fed. And it was looking at me.

I'd never looked a wild animal in the eye before. The rat was obviously self-aware, smart, and wary. It did not run but held its ground and waited to see what I was going to do. I didn't want to risk letting it out of the stairwell and into the rest of the building, so I went back down the stairs, leaving the rat where it was, and exited the stairwell the way I came in.

I have since learned that rats are very intelligent social animals. They make excellent pets (though it's better to have two so they don't get lonely) and bond with their owners. And, they have a claim to their place on this earth, rightful citizens of God's creation. I saw 'I-have-a-right-to-exist' in the rat's eyes. The rat knew that God had made him too.

You probably want to know the end to the story. John Barthle (our maintenance man) checked the stairwell the next day. The rat was nowhere to be found. A small hole had been gnawed in the old wooden door at the bottom of the stairwell. John covered it. I never saw my friend again.

Sister Eileen Dunbar

Beneficial Critters

Observing nature's critters in the aquaponic farm every day is an up close and personal discovery, far better than driving to a city botanical garden miles away. It was easy to tell about this topic since one of my diversified photo folders is entitled, "critters."

Typically, in a span of ten minutes, Mother Nature's intelligence reveals itself through insects and amphibians in the pesticide-free area around the greenhouse, in the blueberry patch filled by this summer's candy roaster squash and around the ever-active compost bin. And typically there's creative activity in the butterfly garden. Just yesterday, a blood red lady beetle was on the lookout for aphids, a praying mantis hobbled across the fruit tree section looking for a victim, and four hungry monarch caterpillars were devouring their sole source of nourishment—the milkweed plant. The view this morning began with a black bumble bee pollinating a yellow flower on the luffa vine, followed by the clever spider on the blueberry leaf that sensed danger from the yellow jacket wasp inches away. Intelligence kicked in and the spider spun an escape on its silk thread and hung on to safety, only to do it again when the wasp crawled closer. Such tactics are everywhere if we step outside to observe and marvel at the web of life around us.



Once, the tilapia fish rearing tanks held a surprise when none other than an unexpected critter emerged for air and a dry view. It seemed to say, "Sure were a lot of fish under there!" Unlike my close relationship with the tilapia, this cute frog soon found a distant landing in search of smaller tasty morsels! Ah, yes, such a natural way to escape from the reality of gloomy politics and worrisome cares.

Sister Miriam Cosgrove

Some Critters I have Known...

Peep

Peep was hatched on the windowsill of my bedroom on the third floor of what is now Benedictine Hall, across the highway from the present monastery. I had noticed some bird swooping activity



occasionally in the area; but because I was seldom in the room during daylight hours, I must have missed the nest construction completely. By the time he was hatched and vocalizing, he was a strong and demanding little fellow. I don't know what species he belonged to, but he was an only child, small but loud.

Peep found out that if he sensed movement on the other side of the window, he could get a response by calling out. He would start quietly and increase his volume until someone stepped up to speak to him. My neighbors and I admired him and watched him grow, but we never put anything out for him to eat. Nevertheless, if he detected movement in the room, he would yell, "PEEP!" until the person faded from view. I think he was lonely. Returning from classes or prayers or chores always elicited a welcome "PEEP", like when your dog greets you at the door after the workday.

We worried about him when he started to exercise his wings. The windowsill was narrow and his exuberance carried him here and there along its length. We all worried that he might fall off before he was ready to fly, but the day came when the little guy was gone for good. Didn't even leave a forwarding address, either. I missed him for a long time and I still think about him once in a while.

Sister Jean Abbott

Viking and the Alien Spaceship

Viking was the monastery dog for several years. We met his mother and sister, so we knew that he was a Labrador

Retriever and probably Border Collie or something similar in size. He was a good dog and he gave us all a lot of smiles with his behavior. He liked to figure things out if he didn't understand what he was seeing at first. You could watch the progress of this activity as it unfolded.

One night I was awakened by frantic barking in the back yard, where he lived. The bark was unusual in that it wasn't exactly a warning bark for an intruder, or a danger bark for impending doom. More like a combination of the two with an overlay of HELP???

So I got up and put on some shoes and found a flashlight and went out into the yard to answer the alarm. Wow, was he ever glad to see me! We stood together and looked out at whatever was moving about in the darkness. It was about 2-2-1/2 feet tall. It had a multicolored metallic finish which reflected the light from the back of the house, and my flashlight, but it was moving up and down and back and forth with no set pattern, and since it didn't seem to be coming at us, I decided to get a closer look. Viking was not happy with my decision. He seemed relieved that I told him to stay, but he didn't want to let me go there, either. There was whining and growling as I walked closer, still puzzled about it. There were no yard lights out there and I had to get really close before I could see it clearly enough.

What it was, was a partially deflated mylar balloon, tied to a weight. It probably came over from the university residence hall area or a student's car in the parking lot. You were right, Viking, it was a spooky alien visitor which was undefinable until I could get right next to it.



I brought it back to where my fearless sentry was waiting. He sniffed it and looked at me like he was saying, "Come on, now, this is just a balloon, but where's the alien spacecraft?" So I took him, and the alien, back to the area where it was first spotted, and we strolled around looking for clues, but didn't find anything more. I gave the hero a big dog biscuit and I went back to bed after taking the balloon into the basement for safekeeping.

Sister Jean Abbott

The Pause that Renews

Are you looking for:

- A retreat opportunity?
- A location for your sabbatical?
- A relaxing vacation from the hectic world in which we live?
- A place to just be?

Fill Your Spirit!

Give yourself the gift of time away in quiet reflection; time away to concentrate on what you know is important; time to connect with your deeper self; time to just enjoy yourself!

New experiences, surroundings and people often inspire us in unexpected ways. The Benedictine Sisters of Florida strive to create an inviting space for all our guests.

You are Welcome Here!



In the beautiful rolling hills of Pasco County, FL, step into the quiet calm of our sunlit home -

Holy Name Monastery.

Tucked away from the rest of the world, you'll find your own comfortable place to recharge...a sanctuary from the bustle of everyday life.

You will be refreshed by hospitality in true Benedictine style. Time is yours to structure! Your stay includes a variety of amenities and opportunities:

- Guest rooms each with private bath
- Stroll/exercise along our prayer path
- Relax, reflect and enjoy nature's beauty
- Daily monastic prayer and Eucharist
- Explore the neighboring Grotto of St. Leo Abbey
- Close proximity to cultural and artistic attractions

RESERVE YOUR STAY TODAY!

12138 Wichers Rd, PO Box 2450
St. Leo, FL 33574-2450
Phone: (352) 588-8320
Fax: (352) 588-8319
Email: maryclareneu@gmail.com



Benedictine Sisters of Florida
Touching Lives through Prayer and Service

Thank You

Just wanted to say I brought my Mom and 4-year old daughter, Liberty, to visit the monastery and we were given a tour by Sister Mary David. She was so hospitable and knowledgeable. I am truly thankful for her and all the sisters. Thank you!

Hannah Buck



Members of the American Benedictine Colleges and Universities visited during their week long seminar at Saint Leo University.

Christmas in July!



We all treasure moments when we are reminded of God's generous love. The Columbiettes of St. Mark the Evangelist Catholic Parish in Tampa, Florida delight in reminding the Benedictine Sisters of Florida of that love with their celebration

of "Christmas in July". Sisters are asked to create a wish list of things they would like to have. The Columbiettes adopt a sister and shop for her with the help of that list. The result is a wonderful array of gifts for each sister.

The gifts were presented on Saturday, July 15th. Items this year ranged from favorite treats to roses for the garden to gift cards to buy shoes or clothes. All the gifts will be cherished i.e. eaten, planted, worn, or otherwise enjoyed during the coming days. **Thank you!**



Upcoming Events Calendar

August 15	Feast of the Assumption
November 1	All Saints Day
November 2	All Souls Day
December 8	Feast of the Immaculate Conception

The St. Scholastica Circle

Saint Scholastica, twin sister to **Saint Benedict**, is the patron saint of Benedictine Sisters. Together with her brother, she is our co-founder. Saint Scholastica's passion for God led her to offer a sanctuary for women seeking a closer relationship with Him (like St. Benedict did for men). We, the Benedictine Sisters of Florida, share their teachings from the **Rule**. A guide written in the 6th Century, the **Rule** illustrates how we can all live a better life and it continues to be profoundly relevant to this day.

Love of God, care for others, leadership and listening, the gentler iterations of the Benedictine way, are thought to have been St. Scholastica's influence in the writing of the **Rule**. In that regard, we have established **The St. Scholastica Circle**.

Our purpose is to broaden our reach. Those who come for retreat to Holy Name come for a variety of reasons: meaning, clarity and purpose in their lives. There is universality in their overwhelming need for peace, especially in the stressful world in which we live.

Would you like to be a part of helping others overcome the feeling of emptiness and distance from the Light of our Lord? Would you help us build our capacity to improve the quality of life for both women and men in need of our Retreat Hospitality, but can't afford what really is a necessity? Holy Name Monastery is a place for people to just be, to be transformed, and to know they are not alone no matter how devastating their circumstances.

Won't you join the 38 current members of this circle of care, built to ensure the Benedictine Sisters can sustain their ministry of light? Recurring donations made monthly or quarterly help us plan and grow our Retreat Hospitality Program. Part of your donations will provide partial scholarships for retreatants who qualify. The remainder of the **The St. Scholastica Circle** donations help to fund the program, especially Directed Retreats, leader, curriculum, staff and housekeeping. See box below to easily set-up your account.

"Everything was an important part of the whole, and seeing the balanced lifestyle in action was powerful."

"Being cared for and cared about by the Sisters, prayer time to be introspective, walks in the gardens, and talking to God have brought me back to what is important."

"Truly blessed having the opportunity to spend this time and reflect."



Give monthly or quarterly now to support the Sisters' giving of the Light!

- Go to our website to set-up account at: **www.benedictinesistersoffl.org**
- Click on DONATE NOW at top of page
- Answer 4 questions just one time—then it is automatic
- Choose a recurring amount for your budget: \$10, \$25, \$50, \$100 or Other
- Cancel or change the amount whenever you need to
- Questions? Email: **cheryl.chadick@saintleo.edu** or Call: **(352) 588-8320**



Papa Joe's Italian Meal

Through the kindness of Rocky Milliman, the Sisters enjoyed a delicious outing in Brooksville's finest Italian restaurant, and were even given transportation in a St. Leo University van. Our driver, Wendel Speer, a security officer escorted us in style and joined us for a great meal. In response to a compliment to Papa Joe that he hadn't changed a bit, his reply was, "I have a secret. I keep the love of Jesus in my heart, keep a good wife, and eat Italian food."

Giving Tuesday

November 28, 2023

Giving Tuesday happens November 28th and we need your help! The day is a **24-hour day of giving** that follows Christmas shopping on Black Friday and cyber Monday.

The logo for Giving Tuesday features the text "#GIVING TUESDAY" in a bold, sans-serif font. The word "GIVING" is in blue, and "TUESDAY" is in black. A red heart symbol, composed of three interlocking V-shapes, replaces the letter "V" in "GIVING".

Please help make this a reality with a donation. Go to: www.benedictinesistersoffl.org.

Click on the Donate Now button at the top of the page. It's easy!

Ask your **friends and family** to join you in this effort. Even \$5.00 or \$10.00 gifts make a difference.

For questions or assistance, call Cheryl at (813) 838-7452.

Checks postmarked by November 28, 2023 and made payable to the Benedictine Sisters of Florida can be sent to: PO Box 2450, St. Leo, FL 33574-2450.

***With your help,
we can do this!***

You Can Produce Your Own Food!

Is summer's heat squashing your energy?
Then plan ahead for our next really cool
Aquaponics training in the fall.

AQUA/HYDROPONICS 5 - DAY COURSE October or November 2023

Who is this course for?

- Families
- Entrepreneurs
- Educators
- Missionaries
- Hobbyists
- Preppers

Course includes classroom instruction and hands-on greenhouse methods. For more information, go to Phil Reasons' (lead instructor) website:
www.aquasol.org

The \$990 5-Day Course Fee Includes:

- ♦ Course Materials
- ♦ Certificate of Participation

REGISTER TODAY!

Call (813) 600-9297 or email:

Philreasons@hotmail.com



Discernment during a Monastic Retreat



The Sisters of Holy Name Monastery in St. Leo, Florida requested that guests on a retreat there write up the effect of the retreat. When I arrived my purposes for the retreat were as before, let the Psalms wash over my soul, worship God as you only can at a monastery, and for the hospitality of the nuns to be a blessing.

Their request caused me to think deeper about what I wanted from this retreat. My life had a lot of stress lately and my spiritual life had become routine and dull. I needed to discern the cause of wanting something different in my spiritual life. What?

As I prayed I remained open to the direction of the Holy Spirit. Below are the thoughts that ran through my mind as I prayed. I wrote them down.

*My relationship with my spiritual director is fine. It is fine, it is working. So do I want more?
Why haven't I contacted her since my wife broke both her feet and was hospitalized for three weeks?
I have not contacted my spiritual director in six weeks. I will contact her today.
(I did.)*

*Maybe what I want is more contemplative worship.
I need to do more Lectio in my daily devotions.
Visiting my wife in the hospital, caring for our dog, and doing her and my chores at home took so much energy. I was exhausted. Being disabled by narcolepsy did not help. My spiritual life became dull.*

*COVID kept me from worshiping in church for a year and from a monastery for two years.
That took a toll. Also, we moved further from Beech Grove and I was not able to drive to Oblate meetings because of the narcolepsy.*

Maybe I need regular retreats, one or two a year to recharge. But I did that regularly in the past and going on retreat became a "should". Too much of a good thing can also dull the experience.

I miss my ministry of spiritual direction. At times, the discerning prayer took me to feeling God's presence more than anything else.

*I miss the silent connection of face-to-face spiritual direction.
Then I felt the prayer was ended.*

Amen.

Conclusions.

I have minimized the effects of COVID, my wife's accident, and narcolepsy on all aspects of my life, spiritual and otherwise.

I strive to be realistic and I have been unrealistic. I need to ask for help.

Praying for Jesus' assistance will help.

Daily devotions and spiritual direction do not fill in for attending worship and retreats.

Larry Rider, OblSB. Greencastle, IN and Tarpon Springs, FL.

Shawls by Sister Jerome

**Crafted
with
Love and
Prayers**



Sister Jerome Leavy was introduced to the Florida Benedictines while attending Holy Family School in North Miami, Florida. She entered our community in 1958. She was awarded a Master's Degree from Notre Dame University and a PhD in education from the University of South Florida. Sister taught in schools staffed by our Sisters in Jacksonville Beach, Sarasota, North Miami and was principal of Saint Anthony School in San Antonio, Florida.

Several years ago **Sister Jerome Leavy** suffered a stroke that left her partially paralyzed on the right side and language-impaired. Her hard fought battle to regain some control over her life has been valiant.

Sister resides at Concordia Village Assisted Living in Tampa and is proud to contribute her artistry for our mission work.

One of Sister Jerome's loves is crocheting and her ability to again create items is a blessing. Her lovely afghans (approx. 36" X 36") are available at the monastery and offered at a minimum donation of \$20 to the Benedictine Sisters of Florida.



The whole exterior of the monastery was painted by Andy Norris and helper Kieren who did a fantastic feat IN THE HEAT of summer!!

From the Oblate Office

The Oblates concluded the use of "Spirituality for the 21st Century" (Insights for the Ages) by Joan Chittister in May. The choice of a new book is still in progress. The oblates have been asked to make suggestions for the next book.

It is amazing to remember that folks have been using the Rule of Benedict for 1500 years! Benedict was so wise; the values he prescribes help us all to grow into the best person we can be. Values so needed in our world today -Community, Peace, Stewardship, Balance of prayer and work, Respect, Humility...to name a few.

That is what the Oblates are learning and putting into practice—they are a vital part of our Community. We are as proud of them as they are of us.

We have continued with Zoom meetings. We have also had a few in-person meetings with a limited number of people at a time. The good thing about Zoom is that we do get to see each other. Oblates at a distance can join us, such as Iris who lives in WA. In the next in-person meeting we have there will be some rites of oblation. Meeting with Zoom does save Oblates travel time and money but they missing Mass with the Sisters and sharing in Sunday dinner.

Let Jesus lead you to a life of purity!

Following are the dates of rest of this year's meetings:

Sept 24

November 26

Join Us!

Contact S. Mary David Hydro at
mary.david.hydro@saintleo.edu



Benedictine Sisters of Florida
Touching Lives through Prayer and Service

Commemorative Bricks
An Enduring Reflection of Love

You can now honor a loved one, celebrate a special day, remember your departed loved one(s) or simply inscribe a message on a brick at Holy Name Monastery. The bricks will lead to and surround the statue of the Blessed Mother at the front of the property. Your gifts will help toward the maintenance and beauty of the monastery grounds and gardens which provide quiet contemplation for all our visitors.

Space is limited, so **reserve** your brick(s) today in honor, remembrance or celebration of those you love in this place of peace. Each brick is 8" X 4" with up to 3 lines of text; maximum of 13 characters per line.

Name: _____

Address: _____ **City:** _____ **State:** _____ **Zip:** _____

Phone: _____ **Email:** _____

Brick Donation - \$120

A Donation of \$120 for each brick can be made by check or credit card:

_____ Check (made payable to Benedictine Sisters of Florida and mailed to: PO Box 2450, St. Leo, FL 33574)

_____ Online via PayPal or credit card at our web-site: www.benedictinesistersoffl.org

_____ We accept Visa or MasterCard – To order by credit card, call us at (352) 588-8443

Fit your message for an engraved brick in the spaces below – maximum 3 lines, 13 characters on each line (including each letter, space and punctuation):

Return this form with payment method by mail to the address below. The form is also online for submission and payment of your order. If you have any questions, contact Cheryl Chadick at the phone number or email address below:

Benedictine Sisters of Florida
Advancement Office
PO Box 2450, St. Leo, FL 33574-2450
(352) 588-8443 * FAX: (352) 588-8319 * Cheryl.chadick@saintleo.edu



Holy Name Monastery

PO Box 2450

St. Leo, FL 33574-2450

CORPORATE COMMITMENT

In an effort to address contemporary local needs, we, the Benedictine Sisters of Florida, commit ourselves and our resources to respond with the compassion of Christ to the hungers of the People of God.

Editorial Team

Editors: Sister Roberta Bailey, *Prioress*,
S. Eileen Dunbar and Development Staff

Writers: Benedictine Sisters

Web Master: Cheryl Chadick

Will to Get It Done is Power and Peace

The internet provides a wealth of information about getting your will done. One reason we found fascinating was in question form: "What do **Abraham Lincoln** - one of the most famous lawyers in history, **Martin Luther King Jr.**, **civil rights leader**, billionaire **Howard Hughes** and rock star **Prince** have in common?" They all died without leaving a will. Unfortunately this is not unusual.

Studies inform us that only about 3 in 10 U.S. adults have a will. And less than half of those age 55 and older have one. You may be one of the 60% of people who say they "just haven't gotten around to it" and 27% don't think there is any urgency.

Too often tremendous problems and emotional turmoil take place with loved ones when wishes are not prepared in a will. The state takes over that job and sometimes assets are temporarily frozen to give the courts time to determine how the assets should be allocated. The process can take a long time and you don't want that to be the case for your family so as the famous motto from Nike goes: ***Just do it!***

And if the Benedictine Sisters of Florida is a charity you wish to leave a gift as part of your legacy, your written will ensures that it will happen for the Sisters.

The Benedictine Sisters of Florida, a 501(c)(3) charity, is happy to assist in your life planning with your lawyer. Just contact **Cheryl Chadick** at:



(352) 588-8320 / Cheryl.chadick@saintleo.edu